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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002633

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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2007

In Today's Papers

Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari Calls for the PKK to Leave Iraq
All papers report international wire services quote Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari as urging the PKK to "leave Iraqi territories at once" and not to bring more problems. Zebari said the Turkish Parliament's cross-border operations authorization was "like a sword hanging over the head of Iraq." Mainstream Hurriyet says Zebari's statement came after a meeting of Turkish Ambassador in Baghdad Derya Kanbay, US Ambassador Ryan Crocker, and Iraqi security minister Shirwan al-Waili. Zebari also said he does not expect a major offensive by the Turkish army into northern Iraq soon, but air attacks against the PKK bases are possible.

On the other hand, papers report Turkish troops near the Iraqi border, especially around Sirnak province, are readying for an operation. The land forces commander General Ilker Basbug is inspecting the troops. Tabloid Aksam claims US helicopters were conducting reconnaissance flights between the border and the town of Zaho.

Papers also report peaceful protest demonstrations against a Turkish attack were held in the towns of Erbil and Dohuk in northern Iraq with demonstrators calling on Turkey to resolve the PKK problem "at home."

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Iraq Incursion

Taha Akyol comments in the mainstream Milliyet: "The armed struggle and cross-border operations against the PKK are not wrong but, while we are pursuing the military struggle, we should also be thinking of ways to prevent people from joining the PKK. That is the main issue, otherwise, even though more terrorists are killed, new ones will replace them immediately. Every incident escalating Turk-Kurd tension is feeding the political, social and physiologic factors of the PKK. Hostile remarks made with nationalist sentiments hurt our innocent Kurdish-origin citizens and encourage ethnic divisions. The solution to countering terrorism lies with the economy,

democracy and the state's armed struggle against terror."

Hasan Mesut Hazar writes in the conservative-nationalist *Turkiye*: "After waiting for a long time for the US and Iraq to take some concrete steps against the PKK and showing great patience, Turkey decided to take this decision [passing the parliamentary motion for a cross-border operation]. Now, Turkey is asking the US to choose between Turkey and the Kurds in Northern Iraq. Is asking the US to choose the right approach? Aren't we wrong by not talking to Barzani, who fought against the PKK in the past together with Turks? Why would it be wrong for Turkey to form its Iraq and Middle East policies by remaining friends with the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq? Turkey should take actions with common sense and consider having direct dialogue with the Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq."

Armenian Genocide Resolution in Congress

All papers report US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was "reconsidering" her pledge to force a vote on the Armenian genocide resolution, and that the US media believes approval of the resolution by the House is unlikely. In a letter to Pelosi, 49 representatives asked for the blockade of the resolution. Mainstream *Sabah* quotes US Representative Robert Wexler as saying the resolution would hardly be approved by the House. Islamist-oriented *Yeni Safak* comments that US lawmakers pulled back support for the resolution due to Turkey's determination in passing a critical motion for a cross-border operation against the PKK in Iraq. Meanwhile, in Ankara, Turkish Ambassador to Washington Nabi Sensoy told members of the Turkish Parliament's foreign affairs commission that the resolution will not be approved. Sensoy said he will go back to Washington on Sunday.

Kurdish Politicians under Investigation

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Sabah, *Radikal*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Zaman*, *Yeni Safak* and others report Turkey's Council of State (*Danistay*) has approved an earlier decision of the Interior Ministry to sack Abdullah Demirbas, the mayor of Sur, a town in Diyarbakir province, for providing municipality services in Kurdish. Liberal *Radikal* reports a lawsuit -- the fourth in three days -- has been filed against Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir for making a statement to the press that his municipality was not given its share from the national budget. The prosecutor said Baydemir's public statement "instigates hate and enmity and jeopardizes public safety," asking for 4.5 years in prison for the mayor. The Diyarbakir prosecutor has also asked for the revoking of parliamentary immunity of the pro-Kurdish DTP lawmaker Aysel Tugluk for a speech she delivered in Diyarbakir in July. Prosecutor asks for five years in prison for Tugluk.

Turkey to Hold Referendum on Constitutional Reforms

All papers report Turkey will go to a referendum on constitutional reforms on October 21. The referendum calls for general elections once in every four years instead of five, the president to be elected by popular vote, and the presidential term to be reduced from the current seven years to five with a second term in office. The ruling AKP and pro-Kurdish DTP support the vote whereas opposition CHP and MHP called for a rejection.

TV Highlights

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- On Thursday, the Syrian head of state Bashar al-Assad said in Istanbul that an independent Kurdish state would be like a "bomb that would blow up the Middle East." Assad also stressed the Iraqi government should be given a chance to meet the Turkish demands regarding the PKK.

- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler accused environment conservationists of working for "foreign intelligence services," saying these groups object to gold exploration in Kaz (Ida) Mountains because they do not want to see a rich Turkey.

- Ankara and London are to sign a strategic cooperation agreement

during the visit of PM Erdogan to Britain on October 22-23.

- The government raised the lowest salaries for civil servants to 812 Turkish Lira (USD 665) a month and eyes USD 7,000 per capita income next year.

- Turkey's first high-speed train will start operation between Ankara and Eskisehir on November 8.

International News

- Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto ended eight years of self-exile last night, making an emotional return to Pakistan. More than 120 people were killed when two bombs exploded near Bhutto's truck during her homecoming parade.

- Blackwater USA, whose private security forces were involved in the fatal shooting of civilians in Iraq last month, will reportedly leave the country once its contract to escort US diplomats expires in May.

- Turkey and Iran will sign an agreement for electricity cooperation in the end of October.

- France's train, bus and subway services were paralyzed yesterday due to a one-day national strike by public transport workers.

WILSON